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November 2010

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Nov. 20 program: Green roof plants, annual meeting and dish-to-pass

Because November 20 is a home football game at Cornell University, our November program, annual meeting and dish-to-pass will be held in Room B at Tompkins County Cooperative Extension, 615 Willow Ave., Ithaca, N.Y. (Where Dey St., Willow Ave. and Rte. 13 meet).

Our featured speaker will be Marguerite Wells of MotherPlants (motherplants.net), a nursery in Enfield, N.Y., that specializes in drought-tolerant, shallow-rooted species (including some natives) adapted to green roofs.

Need directions? Visit: ccetompkins.org/about or call the CCE office during regular business hours: (607) 272-2292. Set up starts at 11 a.m. with dish-to-pass at noon. The program will begin at 1 p.m.



Marguerite Wells, MotherPlants, Enfield, N.Y.



Green-roofed doghouses

More Tastes of Denver Rock Gardening

The next installment from Carol Eichler and Donna Kraft, who attended 2010 NARGS annual meeting, July 11-14, 2010 in Colorado.

Still on our first full day in Colorado, Donna and I were keeping an eye on the time as we toured private gardens. We wanted to explore Denver Botanic Gardens before the dinner/reception and evening programs.

With one thing and another (an afternoon thunderstorm, dinner unexpectedly moved ahead an hour) our experience became hurried and far too short. So we made the decision to return the next day (Monday) to enjoy a full morning there and to delay our departure to Salida (hurray for the freedom of our own wheels), where programs were to reconvene that evening.

As botanic gardens go, DBG is young – founded in 1951, moved to its current downtown site in 1958. However it was ahead of its time by being one of the first gardens in the country to emphasize native plants and to champion environmentally responsible practices, such as water conservation and biological control of pests.

It also has two off-site gardens at Chatfield (<http://www.botanicgardens.org/content/denver-botanic-gardens-chatfield>) and Mt. Goliath (<http://www.botanicgardens.org/content/our-gardens-mount-goliath>). We kept hearing so much about Mt. Goliath that it soon got on both our “must see” post-conference lists. Mt. Goliath includes a rock garden managed by DBG, located along the road to Mt. Evans Recreation Area. The rather harrowing drive takes you all the way to the top of Mt. Evans. But the garden is only one reason to go. The spectacular views, the wildlife, and the bristlecone pines are 3 more top-notch reasons. But I digress.

Back at DBG, our ultimate destination was to fully experience the rock garden, located at the far end. We were happily distracted by many inspiring display beds along the way. Our appreciation was enhanced by presentations on Sunday evening by DBG staff

Mike Kintgen, Senior Horticulturist in the Rock Alpine Garden, and Dan Johnson, Curator of Native Plants. And, did I mention the Henry Moore sculptures on display too? There was so much to see and still not enough time to take it all in. Alas, the rest will have to wait until “next time.” Enjoy these pictures! (Next page.)



We were drawn to the water smart garden near the entrance with its wonderful diversity of flowering plants.



The Moraine Garden offers a glimpse of prairie and trees offering a transition to the nearby urban environment.



Placing small plants at eye level amid the boulders- what a great idea!

One trough among many placed in groupings. What's a garden without troughs?



DBG showed me that rock gardening isn't just about small plants. Here Donna and the gardens are preparing for the coming record-breaking 100 degree heat spell.

After seeing how the Cottonwood Border was constructed in the previous evening's slide show, it enhanced our appreciation for this floriferous, grass-based natives bed. Definitely an idea I plan to implement.

Little Bulbs for Rock and Woodland Gardens in New Jersey

This article © Judy Glattstein 2010 www.bellewood-gardens.com, used with permission. It originally appeared in the October 2010 issue of Growing Interests, the newsletter of the Watnong Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society. "The recommendations should apply equally well for Central NY - though we're not in New Jersey," suggests Plant of the Month coordinator John Gilrein.

The Rock Garden

A rock garden is, for preference, located in full sun, has a well-drained gritty soil, and generally has a mineralized, infertile soil. Choose small, dwarf geophytes that will appear in proportion to the other plants such as *Phlox subulata*, *Iberis sempervirens*, and thymes. Both spring and fall flowering crocus are good choices, as are little tulips such as *Tulipa kaufmanniana* and *T. greigii*

and their cultivars, as well as species such as *T. bakerii*, *T. hageri splendens*, *T. clusiana*, and others. Dwarf species of alliums will do well. Spring-flowering *Bulbocodium vernum* is another good choice, along with *Iris danfordiae*, *I. histrioides*, and *I. reticulata*. Both spring and autumn flowering crocus are another excellent choice.

Geophytes for the Woodland Garden

A wide range of geophytes will grow quite well in woodland areas, springing into growth, flowering, then going dormant as the trees leaf out. In light to moderate shade, at the edge of woodland, or under a small tree such as a flowering dogwood, *Cornus florida*, grown as a specimen in a lawn, there are options for planting from among a wide diversity of little geophytes. Grecian windflower, *Anemone blanda*; glory of the snow, *Chionodoxa* species; cyclamen, *Cyclamen coum* and *C. hederifolium*; winter aconite, *Eranthis hyemalis*; dogtooth violet, *Erythronium* species and cultivars; Guinea hen flower, *Fritillaria meleagris*; snowdrop, *Galanthus* species are just a start. Wood hyacinth, *Hyacinthoides hispanicus* and English bluebell, *H. non-scriptus* like room to spread. Spring snowflake, *Leucojum vernum* prefers a somewhat moist but not soggy site. Deer resistant daffodils, *Narcissus* species and cultivars thrive in light shade. Our native *Arisaema triphyllum* and the many Asian species of *Arisaema* are excellent choices. Do not overlook all the wonderful native woodland wildflowers that have lumpy underground storage structures: Dutchman's breeches, *Dicentra cucullaria* and squirrel corn, *D. canadensis*; spring beauty, *Claytonia virginica*; dogtooth violet, *Erythronium* species and cultivars; bloodroot, *Sanguinaria canadensis*, and trilliums.

Geophytes for Planting Under Groundcovers

Remember that the geophyte must be vigorous enough to reach daylight from beneath the groundcover. In shady sites where running myrtle, *Vinca minor*, is a familiar option, select larger geophytes such as daffodils or hyacinths. Pachysandra is too vigorous for small geophytes such as winter aconite, *Eranthis hiemalis*, or even *Galanthus nivalis*. In sunny areas try species crocus with thyme.

Geophytes for Damp Sites

For a damp meadow, a sunny grassy place that might be temporarily inundated but then subside to merely moist, consider growing Guinea hen flower, *Fritillaria meleagris*, three-cornered leek, *Allium triquetrum*; camassia, *Camassia quamash*; or *Lilium superbum*.

In Praise of Silver Plants

From John Gilrein, Plant of the Month coordinator

Plants with silver foliage are generally adapted to dry conditions, so they are natural choices for planting in a rock garden. Light-colored foliage, a waxy bloom, and fuzzy or hairy leaves are adaptations to help plants cope with bright sun and reduce loss of water through the leaves. It is not unusual for these drought-resistant plants to hold up unflinchingly through summer heat and drought.

I appreciate having plants looking good at the height of summer without demanding extra attention. Just as with green-leaved plants with their varying shades of green, silver-leaved



Alyssum sp.

plants vary in color from silvery white to silvery blue or green. Silver-leaved plants provide interest in the garden when few plants are blooming and some plants have gone dormant.

I am a great fan of plantswoman Rosemary Verey's idea of combining silvery foliage with cool colored flowers in shades of blue, purple, and pink – not that my garden is that coordinated yet.

Plants adapted to dry conditions almost always need sun and well drained soil, and some prefer the sharp drainage of the rock garden or scree.

A sample of some hardy silver-leaved plants for our area are:

- *Acantholimon araxanum* and *armenum* have prickly silver foliage and pink flowers. Need sharp drainage.
- *Aethionemas grandiflorum* and *oppositifolium* (*Eunomia oppositifolium*) have bluish silvery leaves and pink flowers. Need sharp drainage.
- *Alyssums*. Some of the dwarf species have very silvery leaves and yellow flowers. Need sharp drainage.
- *Arabis caucasica* has white flowers. This species will grow in sun or part shade and does not demand sharp drainage.
- *Arenaria tetraquetra* is a rarely flowering cushion. Needs sharp drainage
- *Artemisias* have silvery white foliage. Only the dwarf ones are appropriate for the rock garden, as some of the larger species spread enthusiastically.
- *Cyclamen hederifolium*. This plant is an exception among silver-leaved plants as it prefers partial shade. Most cyclamen have mottled leaves, but there are unusual cultivars with silver leaves.
- *Dianthus*. Silvery leaved species include *D. erinaceous*, *D. freynii*, *D. gratianopolis*, and *D. simulans*. They generally have pink flowers, and need sharp drainage.
- *Eriogonums umbellatum* and *ovalifolium*. Variable flower colors on low mats. Needs sharp drainage.
- *Lavandula angustifolia*. Flowers in shades of purple, best in sun with good to sharp drainage.
- *Saxifraga*. The silver saxes are outstanding trough and rock garden plants for part shade and gritty soil.
- *Sedums caucicum*, *dasyphyllum*, and *spathulifolium*. Easy plants with pink, white or yellow flowers.



Salvia sp.



Hieraceum sp.

- *Thymus lanuginosa*. Woolly thyme makes a very low fuzzy mat that seldom flowers and never has a bad day.
- *Verbascum bombyciferum*. This is a very large, biennial mullein, similar to the common weed but with silvery white felted leaves and butter yellow flowers. It's really too big for the rock garden, but the fuzzy silver leaves are charming.
- *Veronica incana* has very silver leaves and purple flowers. For sun in well drained soil.



Verbascum bombyciferum

News from National

Lee Raden, Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, who served as NARGS President from 1986 - 1990. died on Oct. 22, 2010, age 85, after declining health during the past few years. Survivors include his wife Mary Ann. See News section of the NARGS website for full obituary.

There is a new Newsletters link in the main menu (left hand side) of NARGS website at www.nargs.org. Several Chapter newsletters (including ours) are available to the public in hopes that this will help the Chapters recruit new members.

The 2011 Western Study Weekend will be held February 25-27 in Sidney, British Columbia. The theme is: Along the Silk Road: Plants from far and near and will feature workshops, plant and seed sales, displays and open gardens. See the NARGS website for details.

The NARGS Book Service closed October 30 for reorganization. Future plans for a continuing NARGS publication service include a link to Amazon titles, website-based book reviews by NARGS members, and sales of NARGS-published books by a volunteer.

People

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Green Dragon Tales

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